Title: Requests the Central Government to provide funds to the Jute Corporation of India (JCI) and implement the Jute Packaging Materials Act.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH (ULUBERIA): Sir, I would like to raise a serious problem faced by the peasants and jute growers of West Bengal, Bihar, Assam and, Eastern Region.

Sir, as you know, jute is one of the important cash crops of these regions. About 40 lakh people are engaged in jute growing and about 5 lakh people are engaged in that business. Out of 73 jute mills, 59 are in West Bengal and about 2.5 lakh workers are engaged in those mills.

Sir, the price of jute is coming down. Now, this is the season of the jute crop. At present, its price is Rs.250 to Rs.300 per quintal, whereas, the cost of production of jute is much more. It is, at least, three times more. The jute growers are demanding that its price should be raised to Rs.1000 per quintal. The Government had not declared adequate price for jute.

Secondly, out of the jute goods export, the Central Government earns about Rs.800 crore and it is estimated that in the Ninth Plan, the Central Government would earn Rs.2,000 crore from the jute export. But this industry is being destroyed gradually.

Sir, there is an Act in our country called Jute Packaging Materials Act. According to this Act, cement and sugar produced in this country have to be packed in jute bags, but due to the pressures from the plastic manufacturers lobby, the Government is ignoring this Act. That is why, the jute industry is in a crisis.

Sir, raw jute is purchased by the Jute Corporation of India (JCI). The Central Government provides funds to the JCI for purchasing raw jute. But due to lack of funds, the JCI is also unable to enter into the market for purchasing raw jute. This is creating a serious problem.

Therefore, I would urge upon the Government to fix the jute price at Rs.1000 per quintal. I would request the Government to provide adequate funds to the JCI so that it can intervene in the raw jute market. Thirdly, the Government should implement the Jute Packaging Materials Act properly so that jute industries and lakhs of workers including peasants could be saved.

I would once again request the Government to take a serious note of these problems and take appropriate action.